FIRST COMICS
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WARP
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FIRST NOTES

FAMILY ALBUM

We've been trying to get this sucker into print for several months now, but this section has been squeezed out by the front-of-the-column material. So with all due apologies to the folks concerned, let me offer a belated welcome to our two most recent staff additions: Doug Rice, ace production assistant, and Ivy Graham, assistant to our office manager Kathy Kotsivas.

Ivy hails from Portland, Oregon — which means we're going to have a lot of cheap laughs at her expense come next winter. Ivy's the mother of our youngest reader, Joel, who's pushing two years. Joel's ambition is to grow up to be exactly like Jon Sable.

If you are a subscriber to any (or, hopefully, all) of our books, Ivy's the one who is responsible for your getting your magazine(s). When she's not babysitting Joel, she's babysitting our ever-growing staff — a tough, almost impossible job.

The name Doug Rice might be familiar to some of you: Doug's long been active in various aspects of comics fandom, and his stories and artwork have appeared in sundry fan and semi-professional publications ... most recently, in *Just Imagine* magazine.

Doug's own work is heavily influenced by Japanese animation — a field in which he's a bona fide expert. He's one of the leading fans responsible for the importation and public exhibition of Japanese cartoons — and you're really missing out on something if you haven't seen some of that stuff.

Among Doug's responsibilities are pasting up the house ad, letters column and First Notes pages and designing and pasting up our monthly First Edition circular which goes out to your friendly neighborhood comics store operator.

Welcome aboard, Ivy and Doug. And if you think things have been crazy thus far, hey, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Rick Obadiah, Publisher

Mike Gold, Managing Editor
Joe Staton, Art Director
Rick Oliver, Associate Editor
Bruce Patterson, Production Coordinator

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A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

AFTER THE APOCOLYPSE

You've no doubt already noticed — particularly if you're reading this column in **Warp** — that this month we're finishing off our nine-part adaptation of the original Warp plays.

Next month, we'll be running our second **Warp Special,** focusing in on the early relationship between Lord Cumulus and Sargon. Just to make things even more interesting, we introduce a fantastic new character and disclose the heretofore undreamed of origin of Dagon. **Warp Special** #2 is a 28 pager, written by **Peter Gillis,** pencilled by **Mark** (King Conan) **Silvestri** — making his First Comics debut — and inked by **Mike Gustovich.**

Then in October, **Warp** #10 begins a whole new storyline, this time composed of several mini-epics which serve to allow our heroes to pick up their lives and take on new challenges. The penciller on this series, I'm extremely proud to say, is the ever-talented **Jerry Bingham.**

The lead story is being expanded to 20 pages, starting with #10 ... so we'll be beginning a new multi-part back-up series which introduces a major new character to the **Warp** saga. This back-up series will merge into the front-of-the-book series somewhere around issue #17 ... and with a little bit of luck, we should be able to go to book-length stories at that time. This new back-up is being written by the aforementioned Mr. Gillis and pencilled by **Bill** (Valaria) **Willingham.**

THE FOURTH PLANET

Next month, we'll be telling you a bit about our newest monthly title. If you picked up last June's issues of **Warp** and/or **Starslayer,** you got an advance peak at the concept, but we'll tell you this much right now: if you're a fan of science fiction as it always was supposed to be (but rarely found in comics) ... if you're a fan of great comic book storytelling and fantastic art ... then **Mars** is going to knock you out of your socks.

Mark Wheatley and **Marc Hempel's Mars** #1 will hit your comics shop the very, very end of September ... along with **Warp Special** #2.

ALSO ...

Since we're hip-deep into hyping our butts off, we'd just like to point out there's something in **E-Man** #9 you've never seen before ... I mean, in addition to the new villain, Tyger Lili. What you've never, ever seen before is ... a **Joe Staton** script! Check it out — you're in for a few surprises.

— Mike Gold

ON SALE NOW

American Flagg #3: "Killed in the Ratings," the amazing conclusion to Reuben Flagg's seminal adventure, "Hard Times." Action, thrills, bizarre plot twists and lots of unbelievably beautiful women — 28 pages of **Howard Chaykin's** finest!

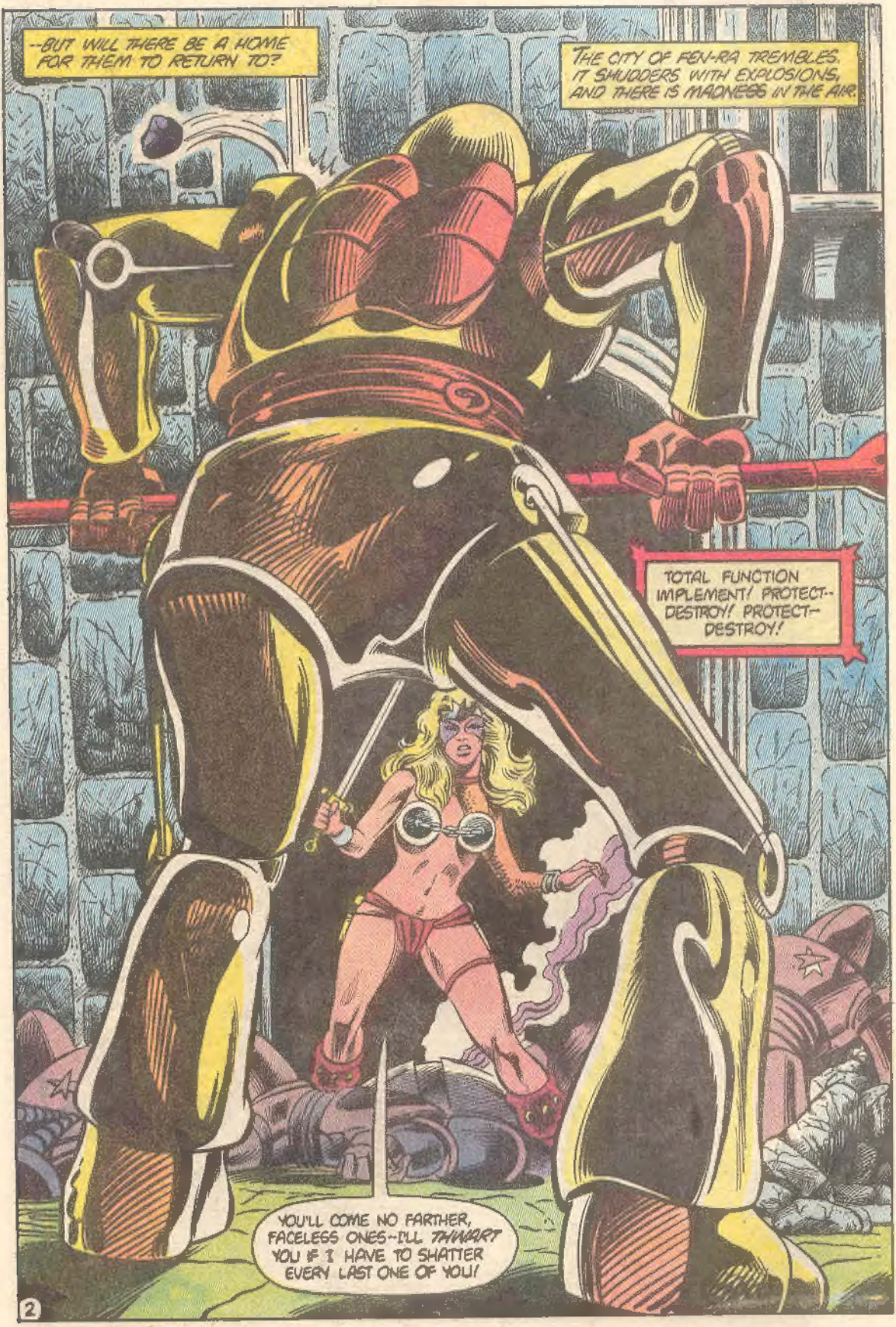
Jon Sable, Freelance #7: Sable's assignment — to protect "The Target" from the Mob's big — and we really mean big — guns! Will our freelance adventurer make his last stand in a deserted skyscraper? Another **Mike Grell** book-length blockbuster!

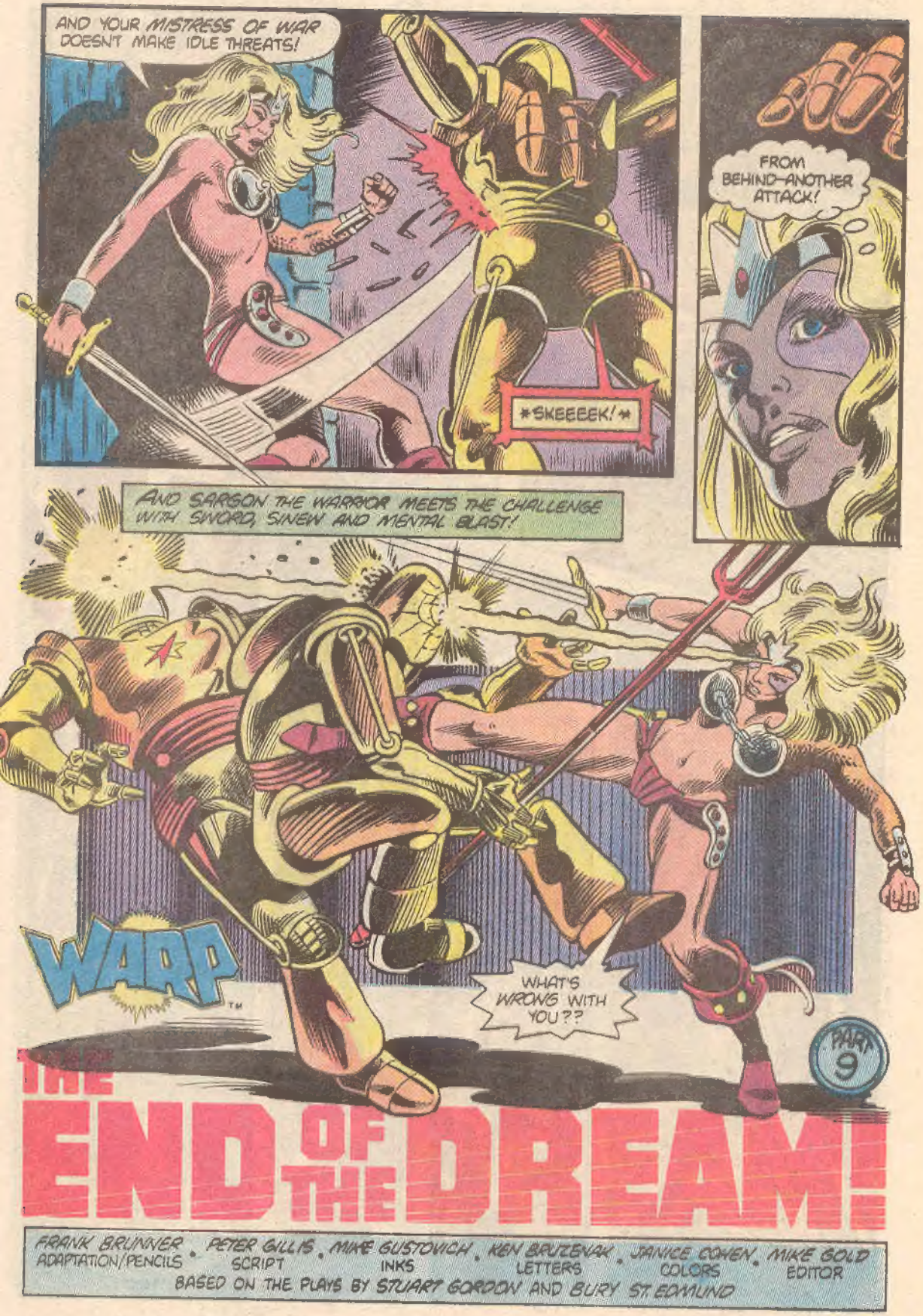
ALSO FIRST IN AUGUST

E-Man #9: Meet the newest and baddest **E-Man** villain of them all — Tyger Lili! Learn the real truth behind Nova's past! Read **Joe Staton's** first script-and-pencil story! Experience **Rich Burchett's** indelible inks! See Buck Godot, **Phil Foglio's** Zap Gun For Hire!

Starslayer #11: Torin Mac Quillon and company, now joined by his one-time foe Crayne — run for their lives — but do they run from or to *The Family?* **John Ostrander, Lenin Delsol** and **Mike Gustovich** provide the answer. And — Ostrander and **Tim Truman** wind-up the first **Grimjack** thriller — "Mortal Gods!"

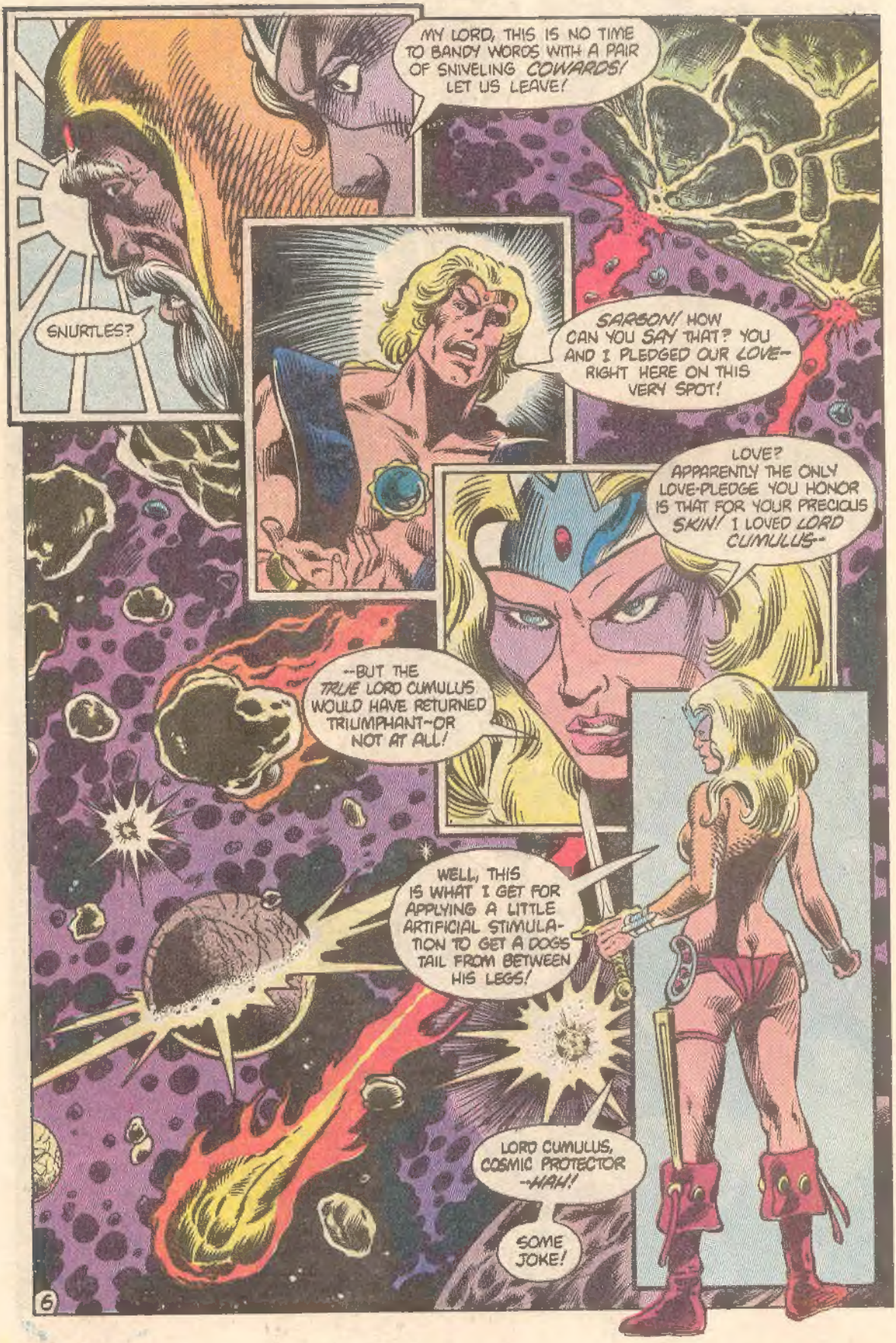
AND SO, CHAOS, LET US TAKE UP THE SWORD AND JOIN TOGETHER ONE LAST TIME...
WE MIGHT AS WELL, CUMULUS --FOR ONE LAST TIME...
AND SO THEY TOUCH WRISTS— THEIR BLOOD MINGLING MYSTICALLY--
THERE IS A GREAT FLASH AS THE TWO DISAPPEAR TO FORM--
--THE HOLY BEING OF EGO--
--AND THEN SHE, TOO, IS GONE.
THE TWO BROTHERS ARE GOING HOME.


--BUT WILL THERE BE A HOME FOR THEM TO RETURN TO?
THE CITY OF FEN-RA TREMBLES. IT SHUDDERS WITH EXPLOSIONS, AND THERE IS MADNESS IN THE AIR.
TOTAL FUNCTION IMPLEMENT! PROTECT--DESTROY! PROTECT--DESTROY!
YOU'LL COME NO FARTHER, FACELESS ONES--I'LL THWART YOU IF I HAVE TO SHATTER EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU!

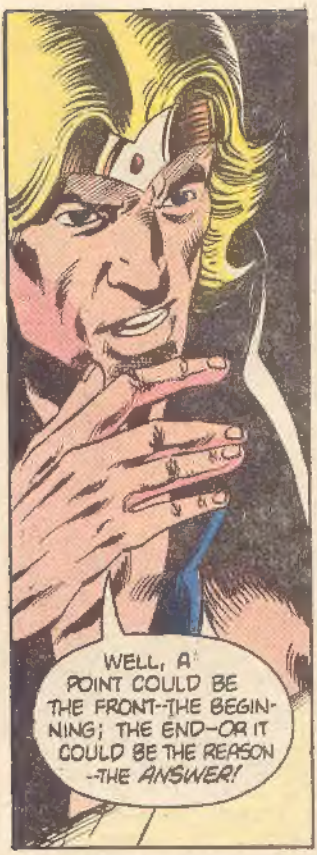

AND YOUR MISTRESS OF WAR DOESN'T MAKE IDLE THREATS!
SKEEEEK!
FROM BEHIND—ANOTHER ATTACK!
AND SARSON THE WARRIOR MEETS THE CHALLENGE WITH SWORD, SINEW AND MENTAL BLAST!
WARP
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU??
PART 9
THE END OF THE DREAM!
FRANK BRUNNER . PETER GILLIS . MIKE GUSTOVICH . KEN BRUZENAK . JANICE COHEN . MIKE GOLD
ADAPTATION/PENCILS . SCRIPT . INKS . LETTERS . COLORS . EDITOR
BASED ON THE PLAYS BY STUART GORDON AND BURY ST EDMUND

LUGULBANDA! LOOK! EVEN YOUR SERVANTS--YOUR CREATIONS-ARE CONSUMED BY MADNESS!
MERE CYBERNETIC MALADJUSTMENT. THEY CAN BE REPLACED.
WHAT FOR? THIS IS TOTAL CATASTROPHE--THE LAST CATASTROPHE! HE WHO DREAMS HAS GONE TERMINAL!
NONSENSE! THIS IS NOT THE DEATH OF GOD--MERELY A GAUGE DISTURBANCE IN THE PHYSIO-TEMPORAL NORMATIVE GRID--
--OR, TO COUCH IT FOR THE NON-SPECIALIST--
MERELY AN ANOMALY!
ALLOW ME, MY LIEGE.
I'M SORRY, BUT THIS LOOKS A WHOLE LOT LIKE APOCALYPSE!
4

FORGIVE ME, FRIEND— YOU'D HAVE BEEN BETTER SERVED BY A SCREWDRIVER.
SARGON-- YOU MUST HAVE FAITH AND COMPOSURE --NOT BITTERNESS AND DESPAIR!
IS IT BITTERNESS TO SEE THE OBVIOUS— THAT CUMULUS AND CHAOS WERE TOO LATE--THAT HE WHO DREAMS IS DEAD AND THIS IS THE END?
I'LL NOT HAVE YOU LEAP TO SUCH OUTRAGEOUS CONCLUSIONS! HE WHO DREAMS CANNOT BE--WHAT IS THIS?
CUMULUS AND CHAOS?!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? DON'T YOU REALIZE--?
MY LORD, WE HAVE FAILED! WE COULD NOT LOCATE THE RING!
COULD NOT? BUT EGO--
CLEAR? BUT EGO--
BEFORE YOU SAY MORE --IT WAS I WHO INSISTED WE RETURN!
WHEN IT WAS CLEAR IT WAS TOO LATE, I BROUGHT US BACK SO I COULD BE WITH THE WOMAN I LOVE!
IT WAS YOUR EGO THAT SCREWED UP AND TOOK US TO SOME MISBEGOTTEN HOLE WHERE A BUNCH OF SNURTLES PLAYED GAMES WITH OUR HEADS!*
*--DON'T ASK. JUST SEE LAST ISSUE. --MIKE.


MY LORD, THIS IS NO TIME TO BANDY WORDS WITH A PAIR OF SNIVELING COWARDS! LET US LEAVE!
SNURTLES?
SARSON! HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? YOU AND I PLEDGED OUR LOVE-- RIGHT HERE ON THIS VERY SPOT!
LOVE? APPARENTLY THE ONLY LOVE-PLEDGE YOU HONOR IS THAT FOR YOUR PRECIOUS SKIN! I LOVED LORD CUMULUS--
--BUT THE TRUE LORD CUMULUS WOULD HAVE RETURNED TRIUMPHANT--OR NOT AT ALL!
WELL, THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR APPLYING A LITTLE ARTIFICIAL STIMULA-TION TO GET A DOGS TAIL FROM BETWEEN HIS LEGS!
LORD CUMULUS, COSMIC PROTECTOR --HAH!
SOME JOKE!
6

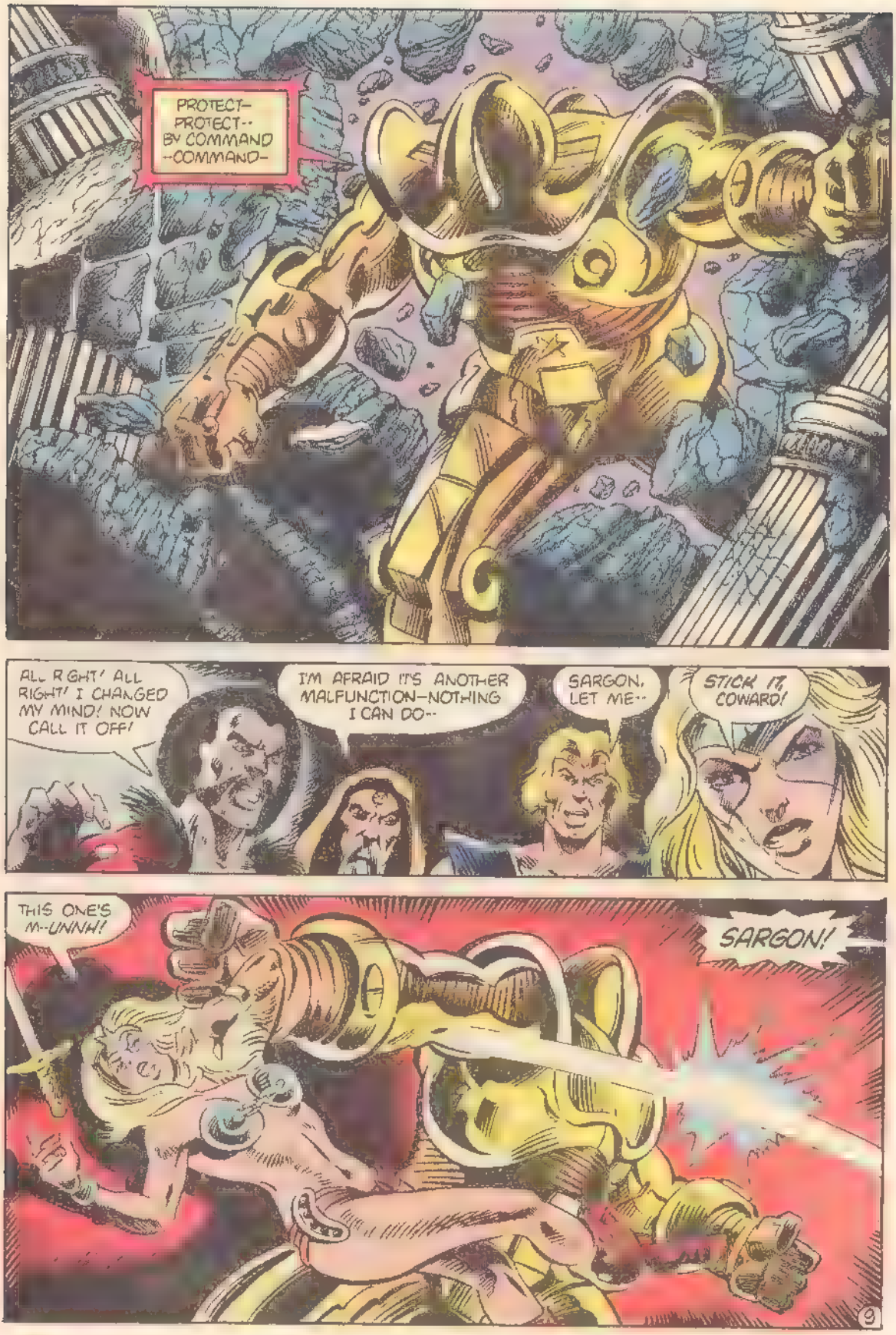
HAD THERE BEEN ONE GLIMMER OF HOPE--JUST ONE--I'D HAVE GIVEN UP MY LIFE AS BLISSFULLY AS YOU YOUR VIRTUE--BUT FINITE BEINGS CANNOT COMB ALL INFINITY! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
IT'S ONLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR A WARRIOR WHEN HE'S DEAD, BURIED AND TURNED TO FERTILIZER. SOMEHOW, YOU'VE MANAGED TO SKIP THE FIRST TWO.
COME ON, CHAOS. LET'S CONTINUE THE QUEST. ANYTHING'S BETTER THAN ARGUING WITH A DELUDED OLD MAID!
I SEE YOU'VE COME AROUND TO MY OPINION. BUT A QUEST NEEDS A DIRECTION, BROTHER.
WELL, YOU'RE THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT. FIGURE ONE OUT.
OK. OBVIOUSLY, SOMETHING WENT WRONG WITH THE QUEST. SO WE FOLLOW THE COSMIC PRINCIPLE: IF YOU MUCK UP--
--READ THE DIRECTIONS AGAIN!
CUMULUS, BRING THE AMULET! WE MUST UNLOCK THE COSMIC CRYSTAL ONCE MORE!
LET'S SEE--"MY DAUGHTER, THE DESPERATE...YADDA YADDA YADDA...ONLY THEN MIGHT YOU DISCERN THE POINT OF DIVINITY!"--NOW WHAT POINT IS THAT?

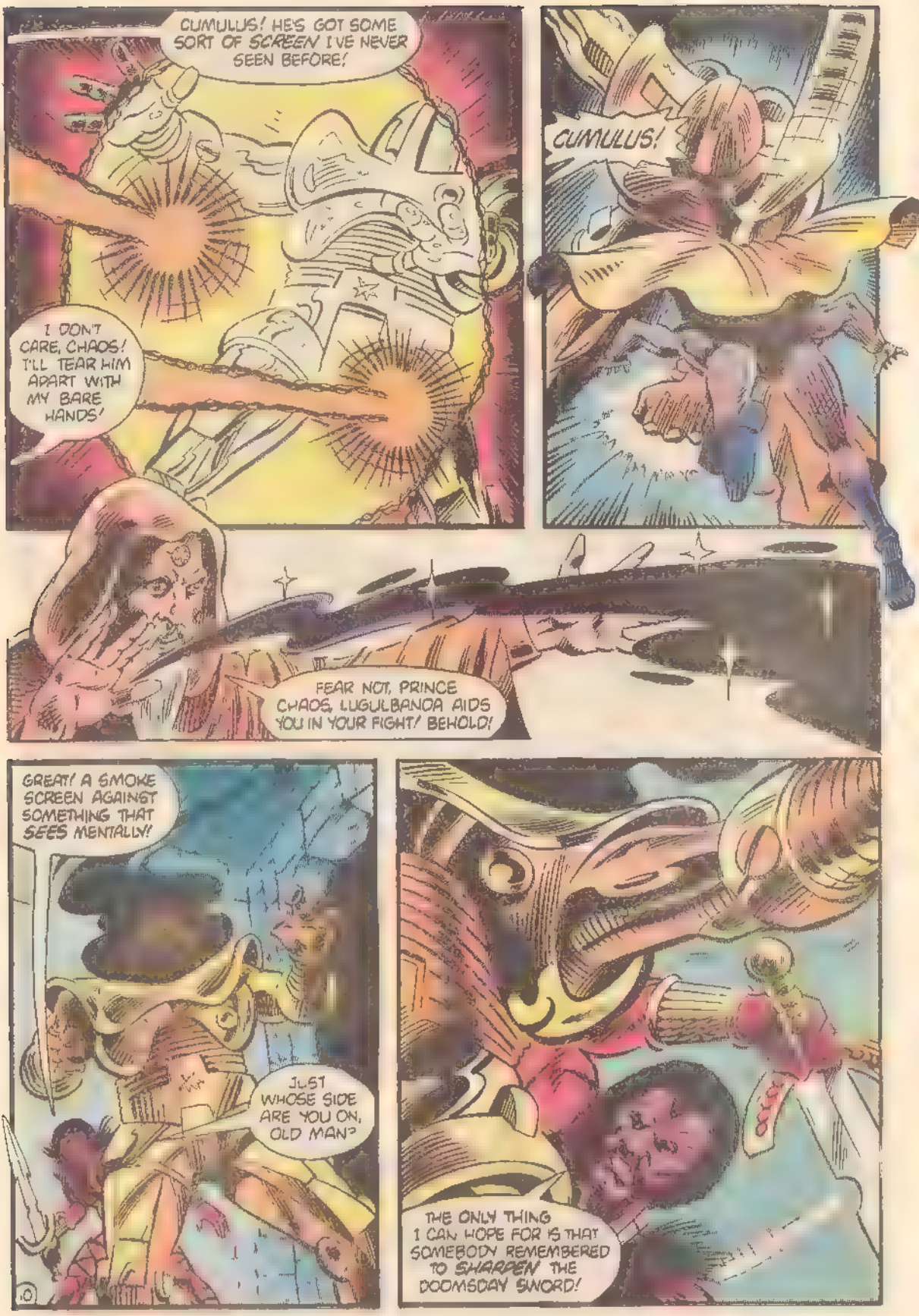

WELL, A POINT COULD BE THE FRONT--THE BEGINNING; THE END--OR IT COULD BE THE REASON --THE ANSWER!

OH, GREAT--WHAT'S GOD'S BEGINNING? WHAT'S HIS END? WHAT IS THE REASON FOR GOD? WHAT IS THE ANSWER? REAL EASY QUESTIONS!
WAIT A SECOND-- THE SNURTLES SAID SOMETHING AS WE LEFT--!

YEAH. BIG HELP. "THINGS ARE NEVER WHERE YOU LOOK FOR THEM."
BUT WAIT--! YOU MAY HAVE SOMETHING! WHERE HAVEN'T WE LOOKED? ONE PLACE IS--

--THE CRYSTAL ITSELF!
IT SAYS, "LET THE TREASURE BE THE MAP, LET THE MAP BE THE TREASURE!"
LET THE TREAS BE YOUR MA LET THE M BE YOU
CHAOS, WE MUST OPEN THE CRYSTAL!
YOUR THEORY IS SHEER LUNACY. I WARN YOU, IT IS ONE THING TO FAIL OUT OF IGNORANCE, AND QUITE ANOTHER TO DELIBERATELY COMMIT SACRILEGE!
YOU SHALL NOT DESPOIL THE CRYSTAL!
8


PROTECT– PROTECT-- BY COMMAND --COMMAND–
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I CHANGED MY MIND! NOW CALL IT OFF!
I'M AFRAID IT'S ANOTHER MALFUNCTION–NOTHING I CAN DO--
SARGON, LET ME--
STICK IT, COWARD!
THIS ONE'S M--UNNH!
SARGON!
9


CUMULUS! HE'S GOT SOME SORT OF SCREEN I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
I DON'T CARE, CHAOS! I'LL TEAR HIM APART WITH MY BARE HANDS!
CUMULUS!
FEAR NOT, PRINCE CHAOS, LUGULBANDA AIDS YOU IN YOUR FIGHT! BEHOLD!
GREAT! A SMOKE SCREEN AGAINST SOMETHING THAT SEES MENTALLY!
JUST WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON, OLD MAN?
THE ONLY THING I CAN HOPE FOR IS THAT SOMEBODY REMEMBERED TO SHARPEN THE DOOMSDAY SWORD!

WELL, WELL! THANK YOU, COSMIC SCISSORS-GRINDER! THIS THING COULD CUT THROUGH ANYTHING!
SKREEE!
ONE COULD ALMOST GET CARRIED AWAY WITH IT! DIE, MAD SAMUROID!
CHAOS, THAT BLOW SHOOK SOMETHING LOOSE--
I WOULDN'T TOUCH A STRAIGHT LINE LIKE THAT, BROTHER, WITH A--
NO, A MEMORY-- GIVE ME THE SWORD.
THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE SWORD AND THE AMULET BEING THE KEY TO FINDING THE RING--AND COUPLED WITH YOUR INSIGHT--
CUT THE RHETORIC, YOU OLD FART! DO IT, CUMULUS!
I TELL YOU THE RING LIES ELSEWHERE! DAMAGE THE CRYSTAL AND YOU BRING YOUR FATHER--AND US-- ONE STEP CLOSER TO DEATH!

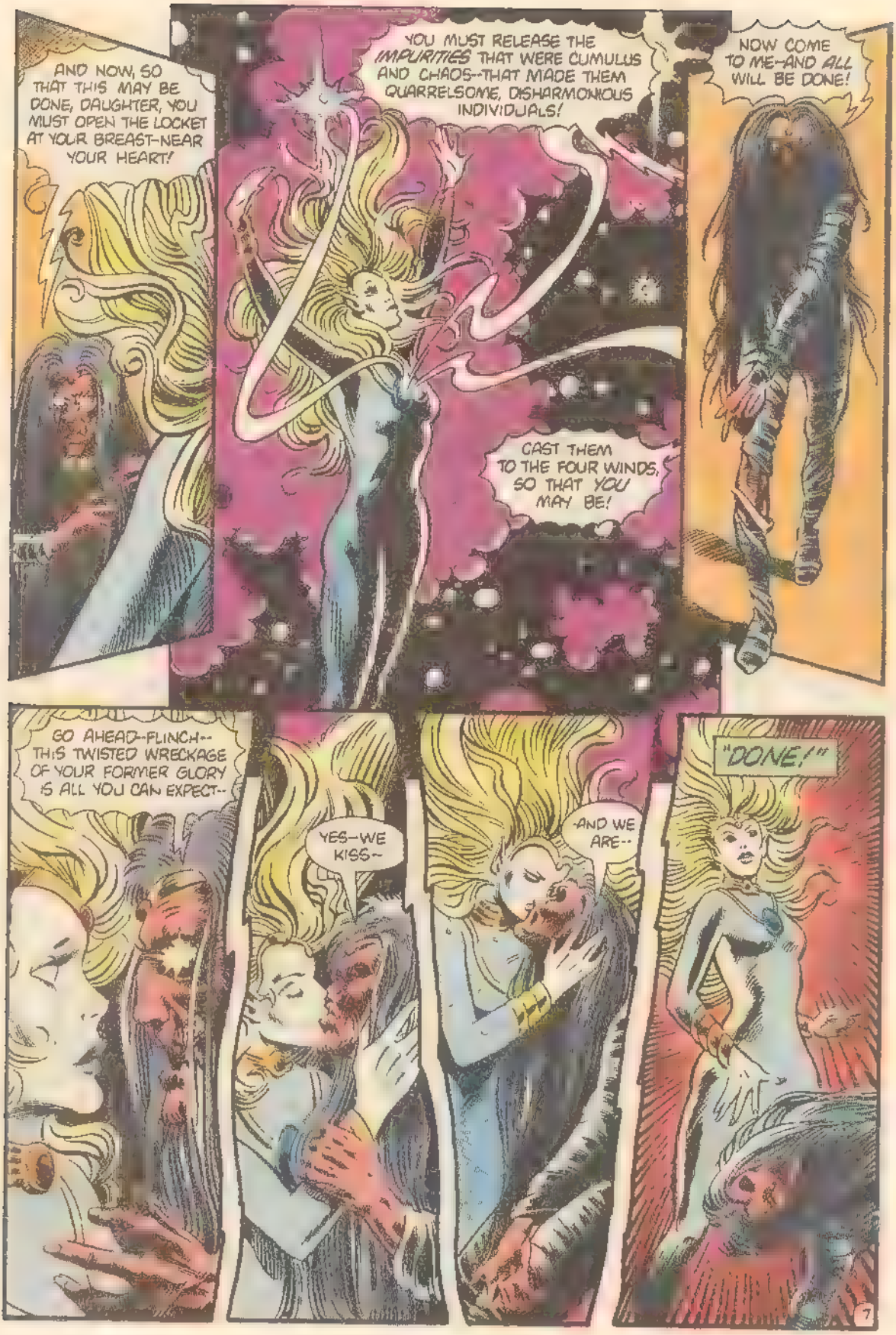
KRISSTAK
WHO ASSAILS ME THUS? WHERE IS EGO?
FORGET EGO. YOU ADDRESS LORD CUMULUS! HAND OVER THE RING INFINITY!
CUMULUS. DON'T YOU DON'T REALIZE-!
WHAT IS THIS MOCKERY? HAS NOT MY WAY BEEN PREPARED? WE ARE FACED WITH IMMINENT ANNIHILATION!

AHH, WE ARE EXPERIENCING A SLIGHT TECHNICAL DELAY, MASTER.
MASTER--?
FATHER--?
IT WASN'T MY FAULT, DAD, HONEST!
WE HAVE FAILED YOU, FATHER. WE DID NOT FIND THE RING.
FIND THE RING? BUT YOU HAVE FOUND THE RING! IT IS COMPLETED WHEN THE CRYSTAL IS OPENED!
MY RING IS NOT A PIECE OF JEWELRY, BUT THE CYCLE OF DIVINITY! A CYCLE THAT HAS MOVED FAR TOO SLOWLY! FIND THE RING! WHO TOLD YOU TO FIND THE RING?
MY LORD--WE WERE DELAYED BY A COMBINATION OF IGNORANCE --AND WHAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED-- DECEPTION BY ONE WHOM WE TRUSTED: LUGULBANDA...
OH, THERE'S A SIMPLE EXPLANATION FOR THAT, OF COURSE.

THERE'D BETTER BE!
QUIET, CHAOS, GO ON
IT WAS MERELY THE COSMIC LIE—THE POISON OF SELF-DOUBT THAT CAN ONLY BE ADMINISTERED BY A FRIEND. THE FINAL TEST, MY LORDS.
ABSOLUTE MEANINGLESS GIBBERISH!
WE HAVE NO TIME FOR ANY OF THIS! ALL THAT MATTERS NOW IS EGO—MY DAUGHTER!
SUMMON HER, OR ALL IS LOST!
YOU DARE PRESENT ME THIS IMBECILE AND CALL HIM THE SPAWN OF DE'TY?
FAH! YOU HAVE BLUNDERED AND FOUGHT YOUR WAY ACROSS THE COSMOS, ONLY INCREASING YOUR DISHARMONY AT EACH STEP! IS THERE NO WAY TO PURIFY YOU TRASH TO MAKE YOU WORTHY TO RE-FORM EGO?
BUT—ISN'T EGO JUST SOME SORT OF HYPER-DIMENSIONAL TAXI-SERVICE?
I DO MY BEST WITH THE MATERIAL PROVIDED, LORD--

WE WILL DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO SAVE YOU, FATHER!
YOU DO *NOT* SAVE HE WHO DREAMS. HE IS NOT TO BE SAVED. YOU *BECOME* HIM. HE IS A *PROCESS*, NOT A BEING.
BECOME GOD? I'M READY!
NO, YOU ARE NOT! NO ONE IS! NONE CAN BEGIN TO COMPREHEND WHAT I FACE! *INFINITY*--INFINITY IS THE RELENTLESS, OMNIPRESENT ONSET OF TOTALITY, ATTACKING WITH AN INFINITE NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES FOR EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY STAR, BEING, *ATOM* IN THE COSMOS! I MUST *FOREVER* GRAPPLE WITH HIM, FENDING OFF TOTAL CHAOS AND ALLOWING ONLY ONE POSSIBILITY TO *SLIP* THROUGH AT A TIME--FOR ALL ETERNITY!
TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE, YOU MUST BECOME EGO --FOREVER!
BUT--SARGON, THAT'LL BE LIKE --SUICIDE!
I WON'T BE *ME!* I WON'T BE--!
BUT YOU WILL BE *HE WHO DREAMS!*

GUESS AGAIN! YOU'RE ASKING CHAOS, PRINCE OF MADNESS, SIMPLY TO OFFER HIMSELF UP FOR OBLIVION? EITHER WAY I'M DEAD-- SO WHY SHOULDN'T I TAKE EVERYONE WITH ME?
EITHER WAY, YOU TAKE EVERYONE WITH YOU. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.
PERFECTLY.
I CAN'T DO THIS ALONE COME
AND THE LIGHT CONSUMES THE TWO BROTHERS--
CHOICE? CHOICE? WE HAVEN'T HAD A CHOICE ABOUT ANYTHING!
WE WERE TRICKED INTO EVERYTHING! AND NOW YOU WANT OUR SOULS!
CUMULUS-- BROTHER--DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT'S BEEN DONE TO US?
WELL... I'M GONNA HATE MYSELF IN THE MORNING
SO LONG, BROTHER
SARGON-- YOUR SWORD--ONE LAST TIME...
--AND EGO APPEARS ONCE MORE!
6


AND NOW, SO THAT THIS MAY BE DONE, DAUGHTER, YOU MUST OPEN THE LOCKET AT YOUR BREAST-NEAR YOUR HEART!
YOU MUST RELEASE THE IMPURITIES THAT WERE CUMULUS AND CHAOS--THAT MADE THEM QUARRELSOME, DISHARMONIOUS INDIVIDUALS!
CAST THEM TO THE FOUR WINDS, SO THAT YOU MAY BE!
NOW COME TO ME--AND ALL WILL BE DONE!
GO AHEAD--FLINCH-- THIS TWISTED WRECKAGE OF YOUR FORMER GLORY IS ALL YOU CAN EXPECT--
YES--WE KISS--
--AND WE ARE--
"DONE!"
7

AND SHE WHO DREAMS REACHES DOWN AND PICKS UP THE DOOMS-DAY SWORD--

-AND STANDING BETWEEN THE SUNDERED HALVES OF THE CRYSTAL GIVES FORTH A NEW LIGHT--

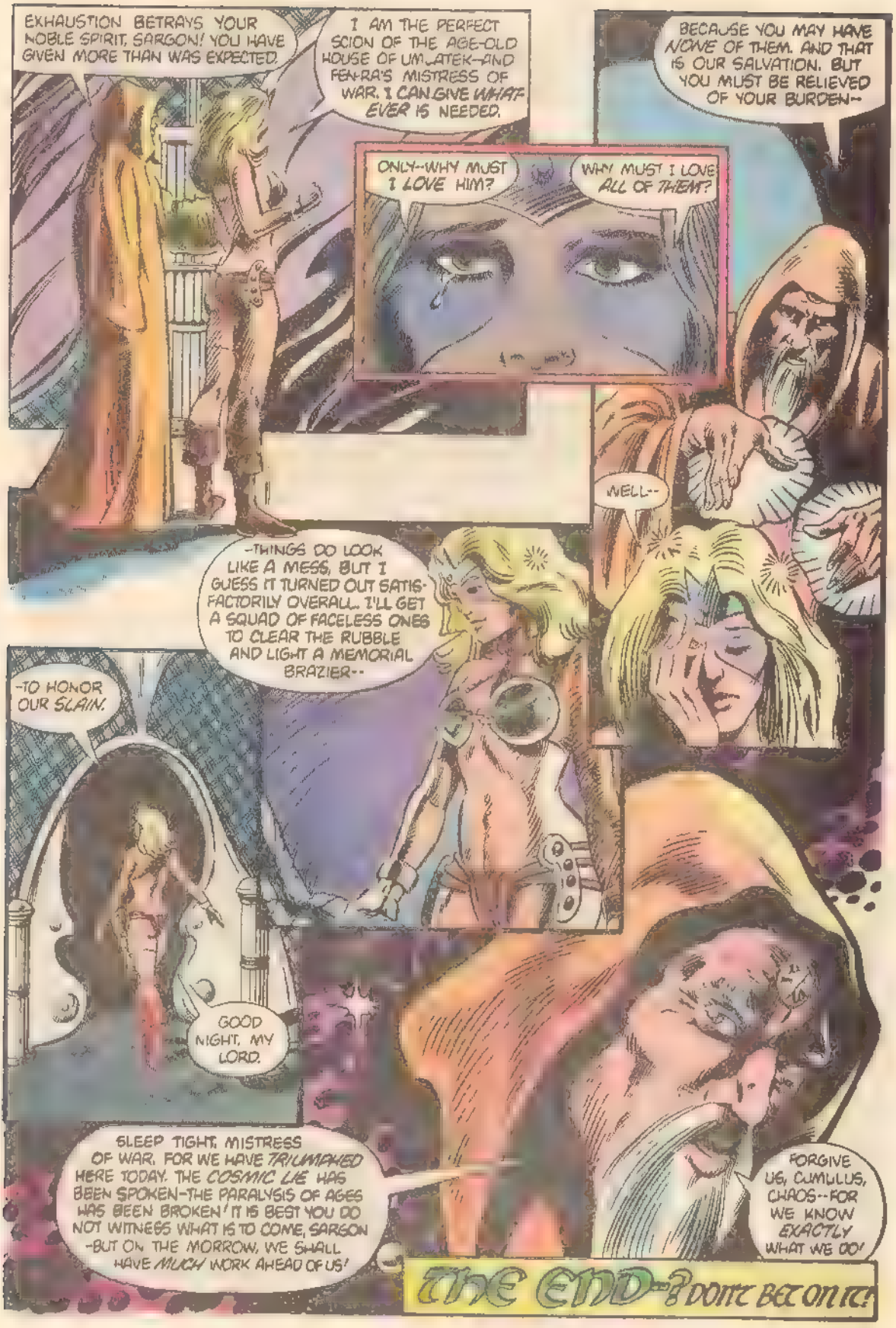
-AND EMBARKS ON A NEW ENDEAVOR.

AWAITING WHAT IS TO COME--!

SO THE CYCLE IS COMPLETE, AND SARGON IS LEFT--EMPTY AND ALONE.

IT'S LATER THAN IT SHOULD BE YOU NEED SOME REST

WHAT I NEED IS A REASON TO DRAW MY NEXT BREATH!


EXHAUSTION BETRAYS YOUR NOBLE SPIRIT, SARGON! YOU HAVE GIVEN MORE THAN WAS EXPECTED.
I AM THE PERFECT SCION OF THE AGE-OLD HOUSE OF UM'ATEK--AND FEN-RA'S MISTRESS OF WAR. I CAN GIVE WHATEVER IS NEEDED.
BECAUSE YOU MAY HAVE NONE OF THEM. AND THAT IS OUR SALVATION. BUT YOU MUST BE RELIEVED OF YOUR BURDEN--
ONLY--WHY MUST I LOVE HIM?
WHY MUST I LOVE ALL OF THEM?
WELL--
--THINGS DO LOOK LIKE A MESS, BUT I GUESS IT TURNED OUT SATISFACTORILY OVERALL. I'LL GET A SQUAD OF FACELESS ONES TO CLEAR THE RUBBLE AND LIGHT A MEMORIAL BRAZIER--
--TO HONOR OUR SLAIN.
GOOD NIGHT, MY LORD.
SLEEP TIGHT, MISTRESS OF WAR. FOR WE HAVE TRIUMPHED HERE TODAY. THE COSMIC LIE HAS BEEN SPOKEN--THE PARALYSIS OF AGES HAS BEEN BROKEN! IT IS BEST YOU DO NOT WITNESS WHAT IS TO COME, SARGON --BUT ON THE MORROW, WE SHALL HAVE MUCH WORK AHEAD OF US!
FORGIVE US, CUMULUS, CHAOS--FOR WE KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE DO!
THE END--? DON'T BET ON IT!

warped words

%FIRST COMICS, 1014 DAVIS STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

Well, there you have it. The end of the saga. And not a neat, clean ending, either: there *will* be a **Warp** #10, and it'll be on sale a mere two months from now.

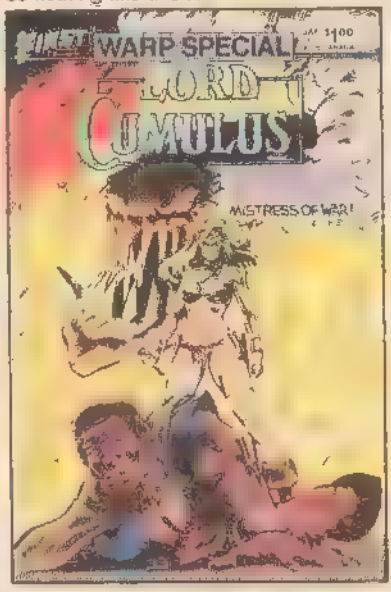
Yes, you read right: we're going to leave you hanging for *two* months, because *next* month, we're going to run the second **Warp Special.**

Warp Special #2 offers us another look at the "previous" Lord Cumulus — the one his brother Prince Chaos did away with in **Warp Special** #1. This time around, we present to you a good, hard look at the relationship between Cumulus and Sargon — Mistress of War, and, just for kicks, we serve up the secret origin of Dagon as well

Don't forget, there's at least 35 000 years of pre-David Carson history in Fen-Ra, and the epic **Warp** saga completed in this issue leaves a number of important events unrevealed. How did Sargon become Mistress of War? Where did Dagon come from? Does Luguibanda play with a full deck? What happened to all the other citizens of Fen-Ra? What's the story between the break-up of the sisters Sargon and Valaria? Who built all those Faceless Ones, anyway?

We're not going to answer *all* of these questions in the second **Warp Special** .. but we're going to get to a few of 'em.

Oh, by the way, we're introducing an Important New Character as well **Peter Gillis** wrote it **Mark** (Conan) **Silvestri** pencilled it, and **Mike Gustovich** inked it, it's a 28 page story, by the way. And the cover, by Silvestri and **Patterson,** looks something like this ..



But we did promise you a **Warp** #10 in October and, without revealing too much, we've got Chaos and Cumulus in one hell of a fix — and Sargon's none too pleased about it! All of *these* conflicts will be resolved in the issue ... as we welcome **Jerry Bingham** to the pencilling chores on what we are calling, out of a lack of anything better to call it, **Warp** — The Next Chapter!

This new chapter follows the adaptation, but is entirely original. Written by **Peter Gillis,** each story will run 20 pages

Bingham, in case you're new to the world of comics, is one of the field's most talented pencillers, most recently handling numerous stories in Heavy Metal magazine. Before that, his work appeared in numerous Marvel and DC titles, a breath-taking run on Iron Man a couple of years ago standing out in mind

We'll also be introducing another Important New Character in our back-up slot The Outrider, created and written by **Peter Gillis** and pencilled by **Bill Willingham,** whose work on the Valaria two-parter concludes in this very issue

The Outrider is an integral part of the **Warp** universe — he's a hero from Fen-Ra who's been locked out of his land by the events told in the first **Warp Special.** Now that the crystal is shattered and things are up for grabs, The Outrider's coming home ... and his story begins in **Warp** #10.

— Mike Gold

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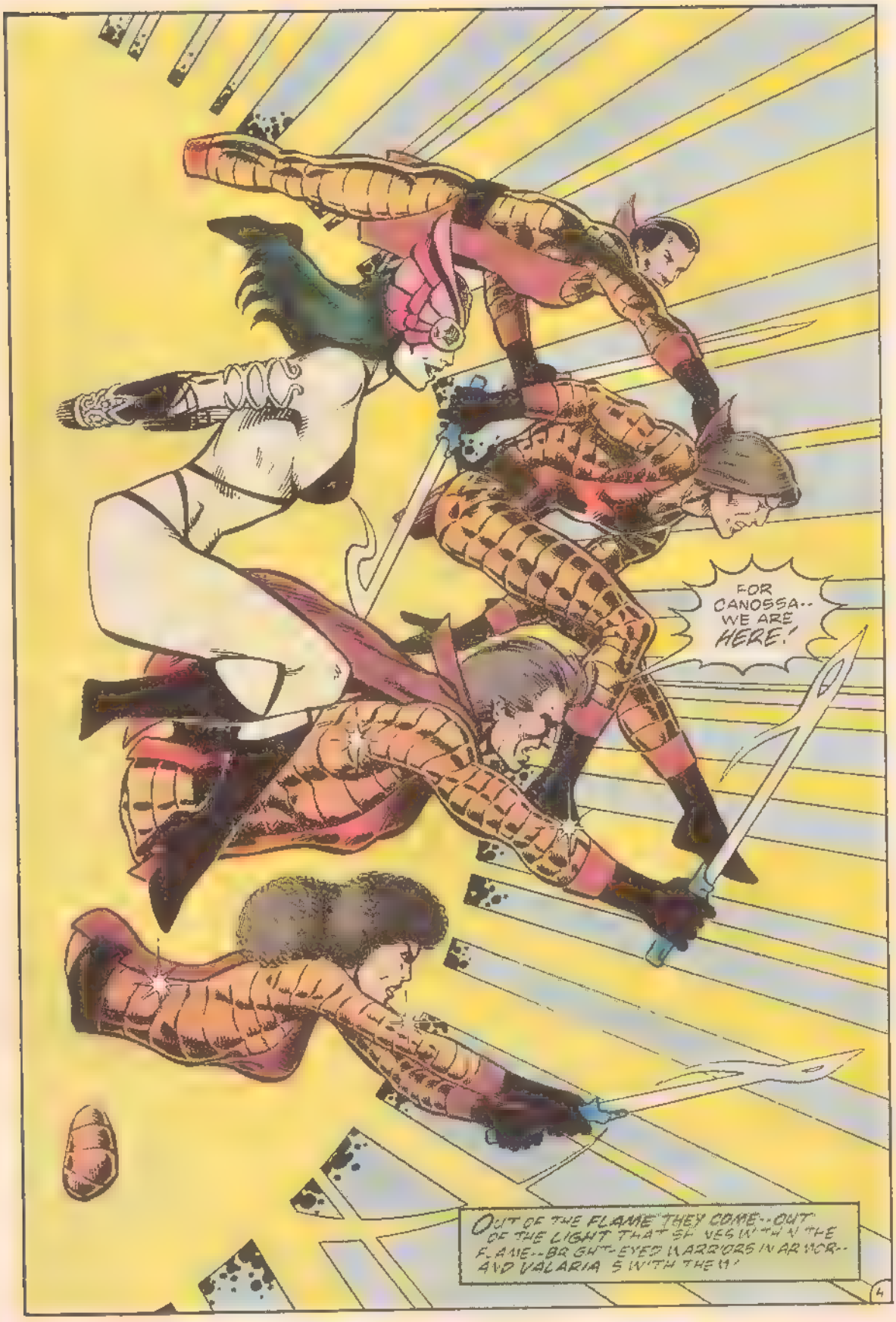
"A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE!"

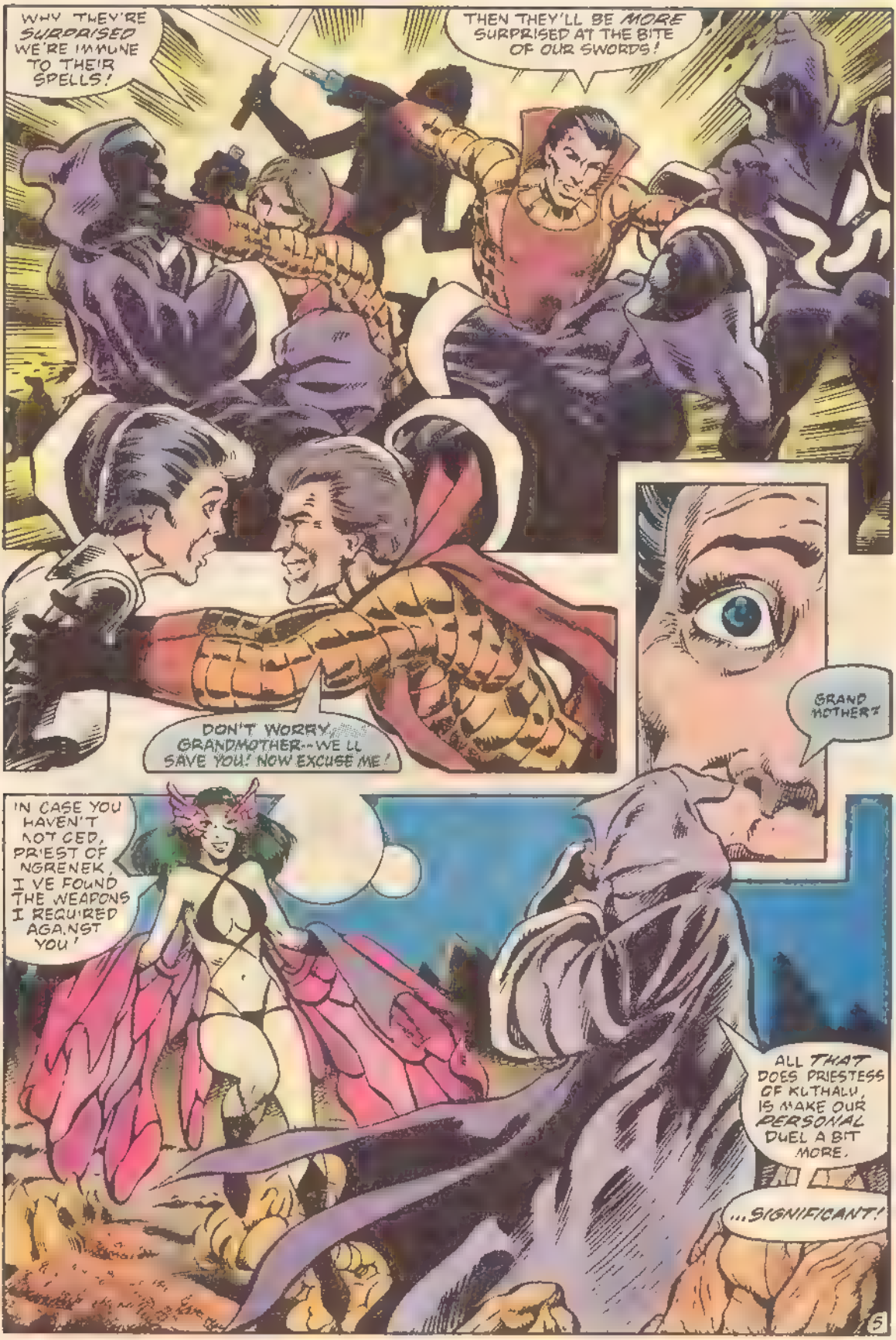
PART 2 "PRICES PAID!"

PETER B GILLIS WRITER
PETE RC LETTERER
BILL WILLINGHAM ARTIST
JANICE COHEN COLORIST
BRUCE PATTERSON INKER
MIKE GOLD EDITOR

IN RETURN FOR HER HELP AGAINST THEIR COMMON FOE, VALAR, A EXACTED THREE PRICES.
FIRST, A BILL ON CREDITS--
SECOND, A DROP OF ELYSIS' OWN BLOOD--
AND, THIRD, ELYSIS' GRANDSON, ORFEO, SOLE REMAINING HEIR TO THE HOUSE OF LAUKR!
IT WAS SCARCELY A MINUTE AGO THAT WOMAN AND CHILD STEPPED THROUGH (PERHAPS) A DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY THAT FLOATED IN A BRAZIER'S FLAME--
--AND ALREADY THE FORCES OF NORDVIEK ARE UPON THEM!
DISARMED BY VALARIA, THE COORDINATOR'S GUARD FIGHT ONLY WITH UTILITY KNIVES AND RAW STEEL--
--AND BOTH SIDES LEARN HOW TO DIE.

INCLUDING, PERHAPS, ELVIS LAURR.
AND MEAN-WHILE--
HAVE FAITH, MEN OF CANOSSA! ALL IS NOT LOST YET!
--THE FLAME IN THE BRAZIER--
THE COORDI-NATOR HERSELF IS FIGHTING.
BUT WE'RE DOWN TO JUST US TWO!
--AND THERE ARE STILL TOO MANY OF THEM
--GROWS--
--IN POWER AND FURY!
HOLD, DEMONS OF NGRENEK!
WHO--?
EVEN IF THE SORCERESS RETURNS, SHE'LL FIND US DEAD!
NOW! THEIR DEATHS MUST BE NOW!
3


FOR CANOSSA-- WE ARE HERE!
OUT OF THE FLAME THEY COME--OUT OF THE LIGHT THAT SHINES WITHIN THE FLAME--BRIGHT-EYED WARRIORS IN ARMOR--AND VALARIA IS WITH THEM!


WHY THEY'RE SURPRISED WE'RE IMMUNE TO THEIR SPELLS!
THEN THEY'LL BE MORE SURPRISED AT THE BITE OF OUR SWORDS!
DON'T WORRY, GRANDMOTHER--WE'LL SAVE YOU! NOW EXCUSE ME!
GRAND MOTHER?
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, PRIEST OF NGRENEK, I'VE FOUND THE WEAPONS I REQUIRED AGAINST YOU!
ALL THAT DOES PRIESTESS OF KUTHALU, IS MAKE OUR PERSONAL DUEL A BIT MORE.
...SIGNIFICANT!
5

AND, BY NGRENEK'S POWER, IT SHALL BE YRHH WHO WINS FOR HIS LORD THIS DAY!
FOR OUR STRUGGLE STILL WILL DETERMINE WHICH OF THE DARK GODS SPREADS ITS INFLUENCE OVER THIS PART OF THE COSMOS!
DEFEND YOURSELF, VALARIA!
VERY WELL
AS YOU SEE, MY ENERGIES ARE GREATER THAN YOURS, YRHH!
I HAVE GAINED MUCH POWER FROM MY --SOJOURN! NOTHING CAN HALT YOUR DOOM!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH ORFEO YOU MONSTER?!
NO! ELYSIS, YOU FOOL!!
6

ACCURATE, MY LITTLE LIZARD. NO MATTER WHAT CHAMPIONS YOU BROUGHT FROM THAT OTHER UNIVERSE, WITH *YOUR* DEFEAT, ALL WILL FALL TO THE LASCARS OF NGRENEK!
YOU'VE--
--RUINED--
--EVERYTHINGGGGGG...
AND AS PAYMENT FOR YOUR KINDLY ACT, ELYSIS LAURR, YOU SHALL BE SPARED THE SIGHT OF WHAT WE SHALL DO TO YOUR WORLD --BY DYING NOW!
NO-- THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS MAGIC--
GRAND-MOTHER!!
NO HAND OF NGRENEK TOUCHES HER!
7

THAT-- WAS A MISTAKE, WARRIOR! IT SHALL BE SOMETHING WORSE THAN A HAND THAT STRIKES YOU DOWN!
I DON'T THHHINK SSSO, PRIESSSST.
WHAT--?
I SSSSAID--
--NOTHING CAN HALT YOUR DOOM--
--AND I MEANT IT!
TAKE DEATH AS YOU HAVE GIVEN IT, SPAWN OF NGRENEK!
SO YOU ARE THE LAST, LASCAR; DO YOU YIELD, OR DO YOU SUFFER THE FATE OF YOUR LEADER?
I-- YIELD, WARRIOR YOU HAVE WON.
9

WHAT'S GOING ON, VALARIA? GIVE ORFEO BACK TO ME.
OF COURSE, COORDINATOR--AND I'M SURE HE'LL BE GLAD TO GO WITH YOU! AFTER ALL, IN THAT OTHER WORLD, WHERE TIME FLOWS--DIFFERENTLY, HE HAS LIVED A LONG LIFE OF WAR AND VIOLENCE, ALL TO THE END OF EVENTUALLY RETURNING TO SAVE YOU!
WHY, HE EVEN MARRIED POOR ME--
--AND TOGETHER WE HAD MANY STRONG AND COURAGEOUS CHILDREN, ALL OF WHOM RISKED THEIR LIVES FOR YOU TODAY!
AND YET, I AM SURE HE WILL GIVE THAT UP--FOR YOU.
DON'T FENCE WITH ME, BITCH! YOU'VE STOLEN MY GRANDCHILD FROM ME, AND I WANT HIM BACK!
IF I DON'T GET HIM BACK AS HE WAS--MY FLEET WILL CAUSE YOUR SUN TO GO NOVA!

VERY WELL.
VALARIA-- DARLING? WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN? WHY DO I FEEL SO--
--FUNNY? GRAMMAW?
HE IS BACK AS HE WAS.
SORCERESS, YOU HAVE CANOSSA'S THANKS. FAREWELL.
DON'T MENTION IT.
MOTHER--HOW COULD YOU LET HER DO THAT? TO WIPE OUT OUR FATHER'S WHOLE LIFE--!
OH, AS FOR REVENGE, DAUGHTER, WITH YOUR HELP, WE'LL HAVE IT SOON ENOUGH! YOU ARE MIGHTY WARRIORS, ALL OF YOU!
AND AS FOR ORFEO LAURR, EVEN THOUGH HE MAY RETURN TO THE INNOCENCE HIS GRANDMOTHER WANTED FOR HIM--"
"--NO RETURN TO INNOCENCE IS EVER COMPLETE, NO MATTER THE SPELL!"
"THERE WILL ALWAYS REMAIN SOME LITTLE PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE, SOME SHARD OF A DREAM."
"AND A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE, AS THEY SAY--"
"--IS A DANGEROUS THING!"
THE END